FEMALE ESTRANGEMENT AND OSTRACIZATION IN THE SELECT WORKS OF BUCHI EMECHETA: A STUDY

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1. INTRODUCTION:

The Post-colonial era presents the time after the end of the imperial rule. The term is defined in various ways. Although in terms of time involved, it is easy to define as its application and the values attached to it vary from one academician to the other. It is applied in a broad range of academic and cultural disciplines. The word post colonialism has become so heterogeneous that it never comes under one definition as it denotes primarily to discursive and texts practices, the construction of identities and subjectivities concrete historical methods. Post colonialism claims for equal rights of all human beings. In post-colonialism, the writers and critics try to make equilibrium between the West and the rest. In a way, post-colonialism claims for material and cultural well-being for all human beings. Post-colonial writers raise their voices of resistance against the dominant class. In the history, the resistance and opposition became a political movement. Post-colonialism argues for the nations of three non-western continents (Africa, Asia, and Latin America) which are largely in subordinated to Europe and North America and come under perpetual economic inequalities. The post-colonial academics, thinkers and writers are seen in an antagonistic mood, and perceive the First World nations as exploiters and the subjugated countries struggle to recover their identities. The people from this world are always repressed and oppressed by the dominant class and the aim of the subjugated class is to pull apart the domination systems. By writing back, the post-colonial critics and authors have tried to build their space. Post-colonial authors and critics are always at loggerheads and they attempt to retrieve and reconstruct their identity in a language that is a foreign and imposed one. The world is divided into the West and the rest. The foundation of such difference is the differences between the blacks and whites. In this setting, the whites are perceived as superior and the blacks are loathed as the wretched ones. White has placed the blacks as well as the browns on the margins. The blacks are often become the object of hate and scorn. Here the colonial rule plays major role in depicting the vanquished masses as mediocre, feminine, naive, coarse and incompetent. The colonized individual's

perception towards the western is also somewhat biased and prejudiced one. Post-colonialism tries to highlight the rights of non-Western people against the Western ideology. In this context feminism is also associated with post-colonialism as the master-slave relationship between man-woman and the colonizers and the colonized are also based on the same logic.

Post-colonialism aids in the political study of the subaltern that is, subordinated people and classes. Connecting subaltern theory with post- colonialism aids to inspect to what extent colonial power prospered in silencing the colonized others like non-whites, non-Europeans, women or the oppressed casters. It aids in seeing how dominant ideologies transform and work the culture of the colonized other. Post-colonial writers and critics deconstruct the theory of power and look back at the Western world from the margin. The same way in feminism, feminist critics critically study the position of women in the patriarchal culture.

2. NIGERIAN LITERATURE

The well-known Nigerian writers like Chinua Achebe, Ben Okri and Wole Soyinka present the pathetic condition of Nigeria during and after the end of colonial rule. Through their works they exhibit their disapproval towards the newborn Nigerian political class. These writings provide the detailed description of Nigerian life and culture. These works reflect the thoughts of the people and help to rekindle the spirit of nationalism and pride. These works celebrate Nigeria's much suppressed past and protest against the cultural servility rendered during the colonial rule. The frustration from the political class is painted vividly in various Nigerian works. The well-known writers protest against the neo imperialism of their own handful people. Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo and John Pepper Clark are one of the literary gems of the magnificent lines of Nigerian literature. Apart from these literary artists like Odia Ofeimum, Nigi Osundare, Biyi-Bandele Thomas and Ben Okri also keep the Nigerian literary spirit alive. Their works focus on the burning issues like corruption, political atrocities and nationalism. So, most of the Nigerian also disapprove the falsified presentation of their land as mystifying, dark and a formless area. They present the true picture of the nation which is undergoing a transformation from a subjugated land to a self-determining country. These writers provide space to the people who face various challenges like poverty, sexism, racism, gender inequality, and polygamy, infringement of reproductive rights, domestic violence and intimidation by patriarchal

practices. The woman artists also present the challenges faced by women because of society, customs and traditions.

The main focus of Nigerian male writers is the male audiences and so the woman is often ignored or assigned marginal roles and portrayed as weak and submissive This woman marginalization even in literature is because of illiteracy that is caused by the societal fetters and preferential treatment to men. Even This male bias in the colonial education also follow education. the patriarchy in the Nigerian society and the restrictive gender roles as daughters, wives and mothers. The traditional woman always hesitates to take front seat. It is because of the conventional norms the woman does not receive conducive environment for their literary expressions. These women do not get the much-needed solitude for the introspective thinking. The fetters by the indifferent attitude of the political system also becomes responsible for her underdevelopment. Despite of this the latter part of 20th century there is an emergence of large number of female writers on the horizon of Nigerian literature. The witers like Grace Ogot and her work Efuru published by East African Publishing House. The other female writers like Flora Nwapa, Mariamma Ba, Ama Ata Aidoo, Efua Sutherland, and Buchi Emecheta are the well-known emissaries of the dawn of black female literary writing. Nigerian cultural stories document indigenous people's cultural experiences through short stories and novels. These stories are the rich storehouse of their people's beliefs, philosophies and experiences. Besides the artistic value these works are also valuable as they provide significant information about their culture and traditions. These stories depict the lifestyle and norms of various primitive communities. These works are informative, educative as well as entertaining. They focuss on the socialization process and try to explain the origin of their existence, and contributions of great personalities. In addition, they create a nexus between the past and the present. Sometimes this past dates back to the primordial or prehistoric era. Modern Nigerian written prose narrative evolved from the traditional,oral narratives. They include myths, legends, folktales and fables.

In actuality, Nigerian literature does reveal numerous development stages through which the Nigerian people have discovered themselves and this may be due to the fact that in most cases, literary critics are products of the community or the people they write about. Hence, this develops and nurtures the author. Since author and society function in a symbiotic relationship, one habitually rubs off on the other. Thus, this

literary genre demonstrates the people's struggle whose nation is still experiencing a painful transformation from colonization.

African literature in English has added a rich, new dimension to the postcolonial literature. Nigeria is the most fertile center of writing in Africa. It has a population of 103 million approximately and nearly 250 languages are spoken in the country. Nigeria is known for its multilingualism. The Nigerian writers have mastered the western literary techniques and are producing different forms of literature of the highest order and they have given prominence to the aspirations of the African people. Buchi Emecheta belongs to that set of the Nigerian writers who has adopted an enlightened outlook.

3. FEMALE EXCLUSION AND HER MANUMISSION

All over the world have been assigned lower and mean position compared to men over the years and she is groomed in such a way that she accepts the male imposed relegated position. This subordinated position is so deeply stamped on a woman's psyche that she performs her duties, functions and obligations without demanding any recognition and accepts it without a slant piece of disobedience. She even enjoys the male perception of woman as an embodiment of love, docility, patience and sacrifice. Female subjection like other societies has become a significant feature of Nigerian society. Woman is expected to devote herself for the menial jobs like cultivation of land, preparation of food, education of children and other matrimonial matters. The Nigerian woman is coerced to accept the marginalized position both at home and work places if allowed to work. She is subjected to scolding, beating, and discarded any time at her man's will. The patriarchal interests are prioritized and society also upheld the important socio-economic and political position of males. However the modern times there is a little change in the status of women in Nigerian society. This is all because of western education, culture, and urbanization .The woman even though for earning is allowed employment which results into her pecuniary independence. These opportunities facilitate in gaining a distinct identity of woman and she starts to realize herself a human being capable of learning and earning. This transformation has shown good results but major faction is still away from this sunny picture. A cursory glance at the Nigerian literary development from pre-colonial to post–colonial period aptly pinpoints the male heritage in African literature.

Exploitation of women is perhaps the most prevalent human rights violations, cutting across borders, class, race, religion and ethnicity. The exploitation of African woman is even more extreme because of the legacy of Western colonialism that ended in economic crisis and dependency. Likewise, the political and economic structural changes led by colonial powers and later executed by international lending and development agencies have additionally amplified the gender gap in these nations. Women in the family and in the society have been deprived of equal access to schooling, job training, occupation, health care, political power and rights. The overall political and economic problems of Africa make life hard for most of the African women. Disparity, repression, poverty, and opportunity lacks are common societal concerns. It is essential to note that African societies are immensely diverse and this makes efforts at simplification rather faltering and not relevant to every society. Second, class and gender influence status and opportunities of individual women. That is, girls born to more elite families will typically have the opportunity to acquire a good education and prestigious career, although they are unlikely to achieve great political or economic power on their own. However, they are prime candidates for marriage to the African men who do wield power and influence.

The practices of exploitation and victimization of women and girl children under the name of traditions and conventions is prevalent in the underdeveloped societies. The pages of history are replete with the unjust treatment to women and girl children. Women are given unfair treatment because of their gender. Many discriminatory traditions and cultural practices are followed against them. People become silent spectators towards these discriminatory practices because the traditions and rituals are passed on from one generation to the other. These traditions support the male domination over the female. Traditionally women are considered as subordinate to men so female child is also treated in a subordinate way. The orthodox African society believes that the male child will carry the legacy of family. So the female child is not given adequate care and education.

African discourses question the ghettoization of women's skills by overlooking at the aspects of class and race boundaries. The investigation on the experiences of gender and power relations within society modifies the history written by man and creates terms from the woman's perceptive.

4. BUCHI EMECHETA AND HER WORKS:

Nigerian novelist Buchi Emecheta is Africa's most prolific woman writer of the second half of the twentieth century. She is one of the most powerful and influential feminine voices in the entire third world. She was born in Lagos on 21st July 1944 and brought up in Ibuza, an Igbo village in eastern Nigeria. Emecheta died on 25th January 2017. Buchi Emecheta, one of the glittering gems of Nigerian autobiographical fiction writers born on 21st July 1944 in Lagos, the erstwhile capital of colonized Nigeria. Her father Jeremy Nwabudinkel Emecheta and mother Alice Okwvekwuhe worked in railway department as molders. At the age of nine she was foundling as her father died, the cycle of miseries did not end, she racks up with another blow when her mother left, her grandmother provided shelter to the orphan child. She got married in the mere age of sixteen to Sylvester Onwardi and had five children. Emecheta has authored numerous books which are of various literary genres like children books, plays for radio and television, poetry, and twelve major novels. Her well-known fictional works are *In the Ditch* (1972), *Second Class Citizen* (1974), *The Bride Price* (1976), *The Slave Girl* (1977), *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), *Destination Biafra* (1981), *Naira Power* (1981), *Double Yoke* (1981), *Rape of Shavi* (1983), *Head above Water* (1986), *Kehinde* (1994), and *Gwendolen* (1989).

5. AN OVERVIEW OF SELECTED NOVELS:

Buchi Emecheta's first work *In the Ditch* published in 1972, though it is her first work, a chronological sequel to her second work the *Second Class Citizen*. In this autobiographical work Buchi Emecheta portrays her difficult life through the protagonist Adah. Emecheta's third novel *The Bride Price* published in 1976 of which the manuscripts were burnt by her husband to shatter her dream of a successful writer furnishes a real picture of Nigerian conventions, traditions, culture and society in strangulating woman's aspirations under the name of civilization. *The Slave Girl* is her fourth work, published in 1977 which won her the Stateman's Jack Campbell Award in 1979. *The Joys of Motherhood* published in 1979, is one of the most adroit and spirituous works of Buchi Emecheta picturizes the pitiable condition of woman in Nigerian society. The novel touches the issues like pregnancy, polygamy, slavery, motherhood, barrenness and violence.

6. RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH:

The research is based on the six novels of Buchi Emecheta. Prejudices play crucial role in dehumanizing the human race. Although the racial superiority is based on illogical assumptions and wrong notions of superiority of one race than the other, it creates the unbreakable gulf between different races and begets violence. Feminism has its origin in Europe, the backers of feminism also tried to put forth the oppression of woman to the world but there is marked difference between the problems of white and black woman, the black woman from the foregoing African countries was trampled under patriarchy, orthodoxy and colonialism, the study of feminism is incomplete without her perusal. The nature of victimization of a black African is quite different from that of white woman. The connotations of African feminists in judging the exploitation of woman and the forms of exploitation stem from concurrence of white man.

7. STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM:

The present research work is deals with the thematic structure of the works Nigerian novelist Buchi Emecheta. Though research works have been done on the writer, there are certain questions that should be explained and the questions are:

How woman is ostracized in the selected novels of Buchi Emecheta?

How does Emecheta try to reshape the Nigerian woman in her works?

How does Emecheta deal with racism in her works?

Is the writer a true spokesperson of the marginalized people and especially that of the woman?

8. IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY:

The present research work attempts an in-depth study of woman her problems, the portrayal of women and girl child characters, their confrontations, and cross-encounters in the selected novels of Buchi Emecheta. Through analyzing the woman subordination in the selected works of Buchi Emecheta, one can get a better understanding of the terms like ostracization, exclusion, alienation, subordination, marginalization, victimization, racism, slavery, nationality, socio-economic-cultural conflicts, up-rootedness, and diasporic feelings. The present study probes into the analysis of colonialism, post-colonialism, otherness, female subjection, immigration cross-cultural and confrontations. It envisions a world free from every form of exploitation, marginalization and subordination.

9. HYPOTHESIS:

Following are the major issues which are the part of the hypothesis of this research work.

- Female ostracization is a significant theme in the select novels of Buchi Emecheta.
- The novels of Buchi Emecheta are focused on female victimization, subordination and marginality.
- The works of Emecheta initiate the readers to think seriously about exploitation, slavery, racism, commoditization and victimization of female characters.
- There is depiction of socio-realism with different aspects found in the contemporary society.
- The novels of Buchi Emecheta present the experiences of Nigerian woman who tries to assert herself against every form of oppression.

10. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research methodology is the elaborated study of the chosen texts. The methodology of research adopted for this work is interpretative, analytical and sociological in nature. The method of library research is followed for the present research; MLA 2012 style and the web sources are also utilized for the present research work.

11. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The focus of the present research is Nigerian woman and her alienation. The aim of the research is to make a detailed study of female characters in Buchi Emecheta's works. The research focuses upon how the writer has presented the female problems and the role of culture her wretchedness.

The present research study has the following aims and objectives

- To examine the female marginalization and girl child.
- To analyze the adverse effects of racism and slavery on woman
- To show how male dominance and culture play crucial role in the discrimination against woman and girl child.
- To explore the portrayal of Emecheta's characters and major themes.

- To examine how the novelist has used her woman and girl child characters who are subordinated and their voices are silenced by males, females and the culture.

12. CHAPTERIZATION OF THE STUDY:

The present research work is divided into five chapters.

Chapter I: Introduction

The first chapter entitled **Introduction** is focused on the general survey of Feminism, African and especially Nigerian literature. It also focuses on the female voices in Buchi Emecheta's works. This chapter comprises of detailed summary of life of Buchi Emecheta and the circumstances in which she was born and brought up. The importance, scope and limitations of the present study have been outlined in this chapter. It gives a brief introduction of the author and a brief summary of the select works by the author. This chapter is the base of the research work as it is the background study of the relevant theories.

Chapter II: Female exclusion in *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch*

The second chapter is entitled **Female exclusion in *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch.*** This chapter defines the terms like racism and subordination. It sheds light on the origin of the term racism, its supporters, opponents, development and the works supporting and protesting racism. A comprehensive study on the racism and women subordination in Buchi Emecheta's famous novels '*In the Ditch*' and '*Second-Class citizen*' has been projected in this chapter. It also discusses the fundamentals of racism, and how racial discrimination has divided the people from living in harmony. It discusses women subordination, its origin and how it affected millions of life. This chapter explains how a woman has become a second class citizen in her own country as well as in the adopted country. It explores the major issues like otherness, alienation and racism, and how woman is uprooted from her base and why she becomes culturally and racially other in the adopted country. The present chapter deals with woman's alienation from her family and her aims and aspirations.

Chapter III:Female Commodification in *The Bride Price* and *The Slave Girl*

The third chapter is entitled **Female Commodification in *The Bride Price* and *The Slave Girl* .**It defines the term commodification, and discusses the role of culture and traditions in supporting the males in the female auction. The chapter primarily focuses on how girls are bartered by their own parents. A detailed study of slavery, its definition, origin, development and its effects on woman have been thoroughly

analysed in this chapter. It describes how girls are made marketable commodities which are sold by their own family members. The present chapter investigates how women are become helpless so that they are forced to accept slavery for the sake of mere survival.

Chapter IV: Isolation of Woman in *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Gwendolen*

The fourth chapter is entitled **Isolation of woman in *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Gwendolen*** focuses on the isolation and how woman is marginalized in Buchi Emecheta's novels: *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Gwendolen*. This chapter highlights woman subordination. The chosen works provide a lucid picture of women's love of gestation that becomes a root cause of her mistreatment. She also succeeds in fulfilling the societal expectations by providing males but ignored because of her gender. Woman never attains her emancipation in the patriarchal society.

Chapter V: Conclusion

The fifth chapter entitled **Conclusion** summarizes the findings and observations regarding the terms like feminism, colonialism and post-colonialism. It encapsulates African and Nigerian literature, female isolation, estrangement and victimization, commoditization. It provides an outline of Emecheta's contribution in providing voices to the silenced female folks. Along with some concluding remarks, it will leave a window for future research.

13. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Margaret Busby's well known work, *Daughters of Africa: An International Anthology of Words and Writing by Women of African Descent from the Ancient Egypt to the Present* is a valuable storehouse for the researcher to familiarise with the black women writers like Toni Cade Bambara, Gwendolyn Brooks, Alice Childress, Maryse Conde, Aldo do Espirito Santo, Marita Golden, Pilar Lopez Gonzales, June Jordan, Terry McMillan, Queen of Sheba, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Phillis Weatley, etc. Lloyd Brown's *Women Writers in Black Africa* makes a beautiful analysis of the works of Buchi Emecheta, Efua Sutherland, Ama Ata Aidoo, Flora Nwapa, and Bessie Head. *Black Women Writing and Identity by* Carole Boyce Davies, is an excellent work that anatomises various cultural crossings, migration,gender, heritage and identity, African women's writing and resistance to domination and marginality. It also focuses on the way a black woman is resented by other black and white women.

14. SCOPE& LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The present research work is confined to the select novels of Buchi Emecheta and they are:

1.*In the Ditch* (1972)

2.*Second Class Citizen* (1974)

3.*The Bride Price* (1976)

4.*The Slave Girl* (1977)

5.The Joys of Motherhood(1979)

6.*Gwendolen* (1989)

15. SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

There is much scope for research on Buchi Emecheta's works. Following are the important issues which can be a basis for further study:

- Optimism in Buchi Emecheta's works.
- Survival strategy of Buchi Emecheta's characters.
- Socio-cultural problems in Buchi Emecheta's works.
- Feminism in Buchi Emecheta's works.
- Social realism in Buchi Emecheta's works

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